amongst tea producing member countries on the production, productivity and research. However, broad aims and objectives of the Association have not yet been finalised. Positive responses are understood to have been received by Sri-Lanka from some tea producing countries. However detailed information in this regard is not yet available.

(c) During the meeting of Indo-Sri Lanka Working Group held on 18th-19th July, 1994, it was inter-alia agreed that the preparatory meeting of the proposed Association might be held at Colombo at a convenient date in early, 1995.

Decline in Tea Exports

1808. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the export of Indian tea has declined by 40 per cent in the current year;

(b) if so, the reasons for this decline; and

(c) steps being contemplated to improve the export of tea?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Exports of tea during the first two months of the current financial year viz. April-May, 1994 as compared to the corresponding period of previous year, have been as under:—

Years	Exports Quantity (Mn. kgs.)
1994-95 (April—May)	15.56
1993-94 (April—May)	19.17
Decrease (%)	(—)18.83

(b) Reasons or lower exports have been lower imports by Iran, Russia and other CIS countries due to their internal economic problems.

(c) In order to step up exports of tea, Russian authorities have been requested to procure higher quantities of teas from India under the debt repayment mechanism. A delegation had also visited Iran recently to sort out issues regarding delays in opening of LCs by Iranian authorities in respect of contracts signed for exports of teas to that country. Other steps taken to boost exports of teas include uninational promotional campaigns through Tea Board's offices abroad. It consists of (i) participation in trade fairs/exhibitions (ii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness towards various unique characteristics of Indian (iii) media campaign to popularise Indian Tea through Tea Board marketing symbol and (iv) support to various foreign brands containing Indian tea. A part of the expenditure incurred by importers for promotional campaigns is met from Tea Board's budget. Tea Board has also undertaken Darjeeling and Assam Logo Campaign in U.K.

Tender Floated by DGS&D for plywood

1809. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:—

(a) whether DGS&D floated a tender for plywood for the year 1993-94 inspite of the fact that the said case was undecided at that time;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) whether rules were misinterpreted to confer the benefits to a particular party;

(d) whether Government are considering to hold an independent enquiry before awarding any contract; and

(e) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons for the same.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) and (b) The original Rate Contract for the year 1992-93 was valid upto 31.7.93. Advertised Tender Enquiry was floated on 9.3.93 by DGS&D for conclusion of Rate Contract for supply of plywood for the year 1993-94. The procedure provides for renewal of the Rate Contract sufficiently ahead of the expiry of the current Rate Contract to maintain continuity of Supply. This was duly complied with.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) and (e) Does not arise.

Enhancing quality of Tobacco cultivation

1810. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to constitute a committee to identify and assist States to enhance the quality of tobacco cultivated in non-irrigated areas;

(b) if so, the details of this proposal; and

(c) if not, what alternative measures will be considered to enhance the quality of tobacco produced?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The question does not arise.

(c) In order to improve quality and yield of tobacco, the Tobacco Board has in hand the following schemes:—

(i) Balanced fertilization;

(ii) Pest and disease control

(iii) Topping and suckering

(iv) Sprinkler irrigation;

(v) Improvement of curing facilities;

(vi) Supply of pure and healthy seedlings:

(vii) Training of farmers at various stages of crop growth;

(viii) Monitoring quality through analysis of pesticide residue and leaf chemistry; and

(ix) Exploring new light soil areas suitable for producing good quality exportable tobacco.

Tobacco Farmers losing Registration with Tobacco Board

1811. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many tobacco farmers have lost their registration with Tobacco Board in 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(b) what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that the present rules are too inflexible, and

(d) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to make the present rules flexible to help farmers with regard to registration with Tobacco Board?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) (i) 7 tobacco farmers registered in 1991-92 did not get registration during 1992-93 season.

(ii) 35 tobacco farmers registered in 1992-93 did not get registration during 1993-94 season.

(b) The reasons for not according of registration to these farmers are as follows:—

(i) Non-payment of registration fee (14 growers in 1993-94).

(ii) Non clearance of tie-up loans arranged from Banks by Board in earlier seasons for producing tobacco (3 in 1992-93, 13 in 1993-94).

(iii) Applicant not possessing fit barn for curing tobacco (9 in 1992.93.6 in 1993-94).

(iv) Applicant involved in disputes regarding ownership of barn (2 in 1993-94).

(v) Mis-conduct of grower during auction (1 in 1992-93).

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.